

Every Student Succeeds Act Highlights regarding the inclusion of Promise Neighborhoods

The Every Student Succeeds Act is slated to replace No Child Left Behind as the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Section 4624 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (“the Act”) authorizes the Promise Neighborhoods program. This brief summarizes the Promise Neighborhoods activities that are authorized under the Act.

Housed under Title IV-21st Century Schools. Title IV (21st Century schools) of the Act authorizes national activities with the following purposes: 1) significantly improve the academic and developmental outcomes of children living in the most distressed communities of the United States, including ensuring school readiness, high school graduation, and access to a community-based continuum of high-quality services; and 2) provide support for the planning, implementation, and operation of full-service community schools that improve the coordination and integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families, particularly for children attending high-poverty schools, including high-poverty rural schools.¹

Definition of the Promise Neighborhoods pipeline of services and supports. The Act defines Promise Neighborhoods strategies as “pipeline services” and utilizes this term to refer to “a continuum of coordinated supports, services, and opportunities for children from birth through entry into and success in postsecondary education, and career attainment” that is designed to improve the following: 1) high-quality early childhood education programs, 2) high-quality school and out-of-school time programs and strategies, 3) transitions from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school into and through postsecondary education and into the workforce, 4) family and community engagement and support, 5) postsecondary and workforce readiness,² 6) community-based support for students who are either living in the community or who have attended schools serviced by the pipeline, 7) social, health, nutrition, and mental health services and supports, and 8) crime prevention and rehabilitation programs for youth.³ Under the Act, eligible entities are authorized to execute “the implementation of a comprehensive, effective continuum of coordinated services” that achieves Title IV’s purpose (described above).⁴

¹ Sec. 4621. p. 597; The Act also mandates that at least 15 percent of all activities conducted under this Title are executed in rural areas.

² This may include job training, internship opportunities, and career counseling.

³ Sec. 4622(3)(A).p.600.

⁴ Sec. 4623(a)(1)(A). p.602.

Eligibility. The following entities are eligible for funding to execute Promise Neighborhoods strategies: 1) higher education institutions, 2) “Indian tribe[s] or tribal organization[s],” and 3) one or more nonprofit entities working in “formal” partnership with at least one of the following entities: 1) high-need local educational agencies (school districts and certain charter schools), 2) higher education institutions, 3) offices of a chief elected official who operates within a local government, and 4) an “Indian tribe or tribal organization.”⁵ To receive funding, eligible entities must submit a plan to the Secretary of ED that describes the following: 1) an intention to improve the academic outcomes of children living in Promise Neighborhoods by providing an evidence-based pipeline of services that addresses the needs of children in the neighborhood;⁶ 2) a needs assessment; 3) measureable annual objectives and outcomes; 4) “all information” that was utilized to determine the pipeline of services that will be provided;⁷ 5) how the eligible entity will collect data on children served by each pipeline service and increase the percentage of children served over time; 6) the process used to develop the application, “including the involvement of family and community members;” 7) strategies to execute the pipeline of services and how the pipeline services will facilitate the coordination of early learning, education, and family involvement services, 8) strategies to create and maintain family engagement, including a description of partnership with higher education institutions, workforce development centers, and employers to “align expectations and programming” with postsecondary education and workforce readiness,⁸ 9) “an explanation” of how the eligible entity will continuously evaluate and improve their continuum of services and supports to provide for continuous program improvement and potential expansion.⁹

Embedding Promise Neighborhoods results and indicators. The Act requires that eligible entities submit an application that summarizes how the entity’s pipeline of services will facilitate the coordination of the following: 1) early learning opportunities, 2) skill-building opportunities for families to learn how to promote early learning and development, 3) appropriate diagnostic assessments and referrals for children with disabilities and children aged three through nine who are experiencing developmental delays, that are consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 4) “supporting, enhancing, operating, or expanding rigorous, comprehensive, effective educational improvements,” including high-quality academic programs, expanded learning time, and programs and activities to promote college enrollment and graduation, 5) “supporting” partnerships between schools and other community resources that focus on academics and other social, health, and familial supports, 6) the provision of social, health, nutrition, and mental health services and supports^{10, 11}

⁵ Sec. 4622. p.598.

⁶ The needs of children in the neighborhood must be determined through a needs assessment.

⁷ Sec. 4624(a)(5); this information must be not include information that is more than 3 years old

⁸ Sec.4624(a)(9).p.611

⁹ Sec. 4624 (a).p.606-618.

¹⁰ Sec. 4624(a)(7)(D); this includes school-based services. p.610

¹¹ Sec. 4624(a)(7).p.608-611.

Needs Assessment requirements. The needs assessment must describe the following: 1) the size and scope of the target community; 2) methodology and analysis, including a description of how parents, families, and community members were engaged in such analysis; 3) an analysis of all community assets, programs, and collaborative efforts that exist within the neighborhood or are accessible to the Promise Neighborhood;¹² this includes “early learning opportunities, family and student supports, local businesses, local educational agencies (school districts and certain charter schools), and higher education; 4) the steps that the eligible entity is taking, at the time of the application, to address these needs; and 5) any barriers that the eligible entity, public agencies, and other community-based organizations have encountered in meeting the aforementioned needs.¹³

Authorized services. Promise Neighborhoods are authorized to implement a comprehensive, effective continuum of coordinated services that achieve Title IV’s purpose, in the following areas: 1) neighborhoods with high concentrations of low-income individuals, 2) neighborhoods with multiple signs of distress, which may include: high rates of poverty, childhood obesity, academic failure, and juvenile delinquency, adjudication, or incarceration; and 3) schools that are implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement activities.¹⁴ Under the Act, the Secretary must allocate a minimum of three grants to entities who are eligible for Promise Neighborhoods funding.¹⁵ Additionally, eligible entities must utilize grant funds to: support the planning of pipeline services, implement pipeline services, and evaluate the success of, and improve, the program, based on data and outcomes.¹⁶

Grant duration and performance metrics. Entities that satisfy the aforementioned requirements are eligible for grants that last up to five years,¹⁷ with the option of applying for a two-year extension. To continue to receive funding, grantees must demonstrate “progress” towards achieving “performance metrics.” Section 4624(h) of the Act instructs the Secretary of ED to establish performance metrics.¹⁸ The Act describes performance metrics as indicators of improved academic and developmental outcomes for children, such as school readiness, high school graduation, postsecondary education, and career readiness. Performance metrics must be designed to promote the following: 1) data-driven decision-making by eligible entities and 2) access to a community-based continuum of high-quality services for children living in the most distressed communities.¹⁹ Additionally, each eligible entity must complete an annual report that is composed of the entity’s progress towards achieving the aforementioned performance metrics. The Act mandates that the Secretary of ED utilize these performance indicators when determining whether to continue, or extend, funding for an eligible entity.²⁰

¹² Entities must also describe programs that are provided through Federal sources.

¹³ Sec. 4624. (a)(4). p.607-608

¹⁴ Sec. 4623. p. 602; the Act mandates that the Secretary allocate at least 15 percent of funding to rural areas.

¹⁵ Sec. 4623 (a)(2)(f). p.606.

¹⁶ Sec. 4624(d)-(e).p.612; during the first and second year of the grant a minimum of 50 percent and 25 percent, respectively, must be utilized to implement these activities.

¹⁷ Sec. 4623(a)(2)(b). p.604.

¹⁸ Sec. 4624(h).p.614.

¹⁹ Sec. 4624(h)(2).p.615.

²⁰ Sec. 4624(h)(3).p.615.

Flexible match requirements. Once an eligible entity receives a Promise Neighborhoods grant, the entity must match grant funds by at least 100 percent.²¹ The Act mandates that a portion of matching funds must come from private sources. However, the Act does not prescribe a specific percentage or ratio. Entities that demonstrate “high need,” particularly rural and tribal entities, are eligible for an adjustment to their matching requirements.²² Additionally, if an entity demonstrates “significant financial hardship,” the Act permits the Secretary of ED to waive or reduce (for one-year periods) all matching requirements under the Promise Neighborhoods program.²³

Evaluation. The Act caps the percentage of funds that may be used towards outcome and impact evaluations, at five percent.²⁴ Eligible entities must conduct evaluations that evaluate the progress of the entity’s activities towards achieving Title IV’s purpose. Additionally, entities must utilize these evaluations to refine and improve Promise Neighborhoods’ activities and the annual measurable performance objectives and outcomes. Entities must provide public notice of the evaluation’s availability.²⁵ The Act also mandates that the Secretary of ED must work with the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences to conduct evaluations of the effectiveness of the Promise Neighborhoods in achieving the subpart’s purpose (described above).²⁶

²¹ Sec. 4623(a)(2)(d)(1)(A)-(B); these matching funds must come from Federal, State, local, and private (including in-kind contributions) sources. p.604.

²² Sec. 4623(a)(2)(d)(1)(C). p.604.

²³ Sec. 4623(a)(2)(d)(1)(D). p.604.

²⁴ Sec. 4624(i). p.616.

²⁵ Sec. 4624(g) p.621.

²⁶ Sec. 4624-4625. p.620